

Remarks

Claims 1-20 were pending in the subject application. By this Amendment, claim 4 has been amended and new claims 46-55 have been added. Claims 21-45 have been canceled because they were withdrawn by the Examiner. The undersigned avers that no new matter is introduced by this amendment. Entry and consideration of the amendments presented herein is respectfully requested. Accordingly, claims 1-20 and 46-55 are currently pending in the subject application. Favorable consideration of the pending claims is earnestly solicited.

Claim 3 has been amended to change the dependency of claim 3 from claim 1 to claim 2, in order to address the Examiner's concern regarding providing an antecedent support for the term "in the cooling wheel" in claim 4. The applicants express their gratitude for the Examiner's careful review of the application. Please also note the addition of new claims 46-55. New claims 46-48 find support at least at page 16, lines 9-10 and page 17, lines 15-17 and new claims 49-55 find support at least at page 18, lines 2 through page 19, lines 27 and Table 2.

Claims 1, 2, 11, 12, and 19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Miller (U.S. Patent No. 5,393,470). The applicants respectfully traverse this grounds for rejection. The Office Action states that "Miller discloses a method of producing an $m \times N$ sheet of optical fibers, comprising: extruding a core material through an extrusion die and extruding a cladding material through an extrusion die (which constitutes "co-extruding" through a "co-extrusion die"), wherein an $m \times N$ array of optical fibers is extruded, each having a portion of the extruded core material surrounded by a portion of the cladding material, and wherein $m \ll N$; merging adjacent optical fibers together after the $m \times N$ array of optical fibers exit the die to form an $m \times N$ sheet of optical fibers." However, the Miller reference does not teach or suggest a method of producing an $m \times N$ sheet of optical fibers. Rather, the Miller reference teaches a method of producing a plurality of individual optical fibers. Referring to column 3, lines 23-50, and Figure 1, it is seen that the Miller reference teaches producing a plurality of individual clad fibers 15 by: first extruding a planar sheet 5 so as to form a planar array of connected fibers (column 3, lines 33-34); next, parting the connected fibers into a plurality of separate elongated fibers 10 (column 3, lines 43-44); and then applying a cladding to the individual fibers to form a plurality of clad fibers 15 (column 3, lines 46-50). The connected fibers in the planar array 5 are made of core material only and do not have

cladding. Cladding is added only after parting the connected fibers into a plurality of separate elongated fibers 10. After the cladding material is added, there is no teaching or suggestion to merge the clad fibers 15 together to form an mxN sheet of optical fibers. This is in contrast with the subject invention, which is directed to a method of producing an mxN sheet of optical fibers incorporating merging adjacent optical fibers together after the mxN array of optical fibers exit the co-extrusion die to form an mxN sheet of optical fibers. Therefore, the Miller reference does not teach each and every limitation of the subject invention, and a proper 35 U.S.C. 102 (b) rejection has not been presented. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 2, 11, 12, and 19 under 35 U.S.C. 102 (b).

Claims 3-7, 13-18, and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Miller (U.S. Patent No. 5,393,470) in view of Bansal *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,548,431). The applicants respectfully traverse this grounds for rejection because the cited references, alone or in combination do not disclose or suggest the unique and advantageous process claimed by the current applicants. The limitations of the Miller reference has been noted with respect for the rejection above under 35 U.S.C. 102(b). The Bansal *et al.* reference does not cure this defect. Therefore, a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been presented, as the Miller reference and the Bansal *et al.* reference above or in combination, do not teach or suggest a method of producing an mxN sheet of optical fibers incorporating merging adjacent optical fibers together after the mxN array of optical fibers exit the co-extrusion die to form an mxN sheet of optical fibers. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 3-7, 13-18, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

The applicants wish to thank the examiner for the indication that claims 8-10 are directed to allowable subject matter.

In view of the foregoing remarks and amendments to the claims, the applicants believe that the currently pending claims are in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17 as required by this paper to Deposit Account 19-0065.

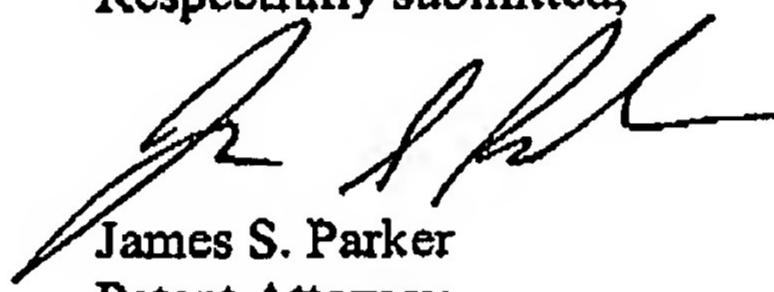
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The applicants invite the Examiner to call the undersigned if clarification is needed on any of this response, or if the Examiner believes a telephonic interview would expedite the prosecution of the subject application to completion.

Applicant invites the Examiner to call the undersigned if clarification is needed on any aspect of this response, or if the Examiner believes there remains any valid ground upon which any claim in this application may be rejected subsequent to entrance of this amendment.

Respectfully submitted,



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